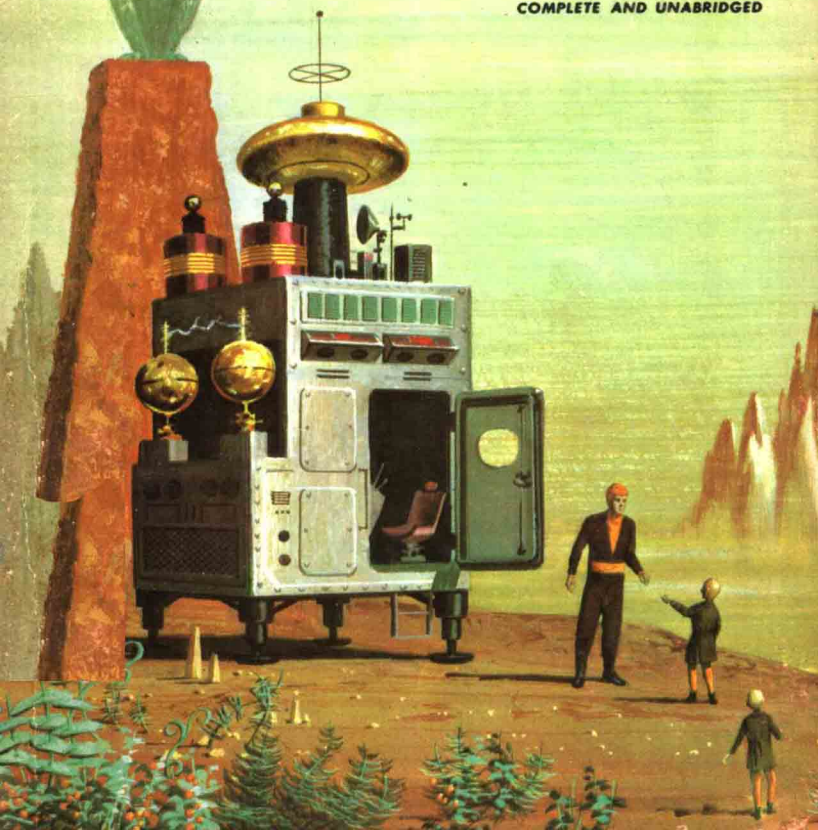


THE TIME MACHINE

H. G. WELLS

with an introduction by DONALD WOLLHEIM

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



The Time Machine



H. G. WELLS

Introduction

When *The Time Machine* was published as a book in England in 1895, it was hailed by one large newspaper, the *Daily Chronicle*, as "something new under the sun." What the paper had in mind was its originality and its exciting new premise, but what this term might easily have included—had the reviewer the use of the time-traveling invention of the story—was the first appearance of a writer who was to achieve world-wide fame and prominence during the next fifty years.

Herbert George Wells was only recently out of college when his first novel was published—the book you are holding now—and it was to prove an auspicious start of a great career. For within its pages was an unusually exciting and imagination-stirring adventure that not only embodied the essence of what we now call science-fiction, but also embodied the theme Wells was to stress throughout his life as a social critic and prophet. For it was in these two fields that H. G. Wells became a name in the world of letters and thought.

As a science-fiction writer he is considered to be the father of modern science-fiction, an honor he shares with Jules Verne. But whereas Verne belongs to a somewhat earlier period, and his works often directed more to a juvenile audience, Wells is directly first in the tradition of the writers of modern English-language science-fiction. Where Verne's works might be called entertainment and the prediction of inventions already close to reality, Wells's works were more concerned with human movement, with the ideas that work on society as the result of changing science and the application of inventions. His ideas were extraordinary, more so than Verne's, precisely because they were not confined to advanced guesses based on actual experimental projects, but were totally new and revolutionary concepts—most of which we do not have today and have not been able to experiment with, and which nonetheless still inspire the imaginative.

Consider Verne: he described the submarine completed, yet the submarine had already been invented. He spoke of airplanes, and aeronautics was already in a planning and experimenting stage. He described a flight around the moon by means of a cannon not dissimilar to those that existed then save in size. But in all his stories, Verne assumed that society would go as he knew it without all these things changing the way people lived.

In the works of Wells, we have otherwise. Living as he did in a time when the Nineteenth Century was rapidly changing into the dynamic and restless world of the Twentieth, Wells foresaw not just inventions but the impact that science would make on social organization and the lives of humanity.

The Time Machine, his first novel, embodies all this. For in it a man, the inventor who discovers how to go into the future and return, starts off in the seemingly stable days of the 1890's, travels tens of thousands of

years onward to learn what a different world for mankind is in the offing. It is a voyage of wonder and marvel, and one that challenges the imagination and compels reflection on the meaning of the present day itself—for Wells forces upon everyone the realization that the future is always the direct outcome of social forces in motion in our own time. He sets forth the very essence of the political and social debate of our entire century—technology for leisure or technology for advancement. Should science be for the good of all or for the good only of some? Are some people destined only to be toilers but never reapers, while others are destined to enjoy without earning what they enjoy? These problems were already a matter of discussion in the boyhood and student days of the young Wells—they remained as the basis of all the political concerns of this century whose shadows he foresaw.

In *The Time Machine* what Wells described is not what he would like to believe, but what was a possibility that could occur. This, he indicates, is the way it could be *if . . . if this or that happens*. He saw humanity divided into two distinct races, which at first we might suppose to be the Haves and the Have-nots, until our daring discoverer learns that neither term quite applies for the truth proves to be even more devastating.

But what the *Daily Chronicle* was calling something new was not so much this speculation which others had projected in dry-as-dust essays before H. G. Wells put it into marvelously exciting science-fiction, it was the idea of using time as a roadway—as something to travel along. This was the really startlingly original idea that Wells contributed.

It was one that had concerned Wells as a student. For *The Time Machine* was only the final product of a whole series of stories he had outlined and written and rewritten

throughout his school days. That he would be a writer was something he had planned since he was twelve; he kept at it the rest of his long life.

Born in 1866 in Bromley, Kent, in England, he was of what we would call the middle class, being neither of the rich nor of the poor. He received good schooling at a private school, studied various trades, went on through what we would now term high school while apprenticed to a chemist, won himself a scholarship at the Royal College of Science, and eventually gained his degree after much effort. He worked in a dry goods shop while trying to make a start as a writer, went on into journalism, wrote articles for obscure magazines, and finally completed the version of *The Time Machine* we know now.

He had been writing things for his own amusement since his school days. He turned out short stories while in high school, and when in college he founded and edited a students' literary magazine called the *Science Schools Journal*. It was in the pages of this magazine that the first attempts at the story of the Time Traveler appeared. It ran, we are told, some three installments, and then Wells decided it was not ready for completion.

This first version of *The Time Machine* was quite different in approach. His title for the work was *The Cosmic Argonauts* and his story concerned an eccentric old scientist named Dr. Moses Nebogipfel, who had invented a machine he called a Cosmic Argo which could travel across time, using time as if it were a fourth dimension of space. We never actually follow the time trip for all that was published of this work were the opening scenes wherein the doctor explains his invention to a local minister while a crowd of angry villagers attacks his house in the belief that he is practicing witchcraft. Dr. N. escapes the fury of the ignorant mob by leaping into his machine and going into the far future. He returns in another part of the neighborhood, battered and bloody, and tells a

stranger a bit of where he has been before escaping once again into the future. But Wells never did get around to telling the details of what befell his man.

H. G. Wells wrote and rewrote this story, adding sections, revising his ideas as to how the machine was to work, changing his views on what the future would be like. After his graduation, a version of the book called simply *The Time Traveler's Story* appeared in a London magazine as a series of disconnected articles, already beginning to resemble the book we have here but by no means complete. The next-to-the-last version ran serially in a magazine called *The New Review* and was almost identical with the book that was to follow in the next year. The book proved an immediate success, and launched the author's career.

In the years that followed, H. G. Wells wrote a group of science-fiction novels, including such masterpieces as *The War of the Worlds*, *The Invisible Man*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and several collections of his short stories. In these writings are to be found many of the basic ideas that make up the framework of modern science-fiction.

Wells felt that it was not the idea that counted as much as what it did to people. People, Wells felt, were the important element: Where was humanity going? What was it going to do with the universe? What was the universe going to do with it?

As he grew older, he devoted more of his time to criticism and politics, rather than to science-fiction, and his later novels are directed to those ends. He developed a profound belief in the necessity of a single world government and a system for permanent world peace. He argued for these on every occasion, and influenced in an idealistic way many who may in turn have swayed in some fashion the course of history. But society did not move fast enough for him and it did not move exactly

as he wished it, and, as the years drew on, he became more critical and more despairing until his last few writings, in the closing years of his life, seem to have given up hope.

H. G. Wells died in 1946, at the age of eighty. He left a great literary heritage, his influence on imaginative writing was immense, his influence on liberal thought was also vast, and, yet, in the opinion of this writer, his greatest work was his first work, *The Time Machine*.

If you have never read *The Time Machine* before, I envy you the experience. It is a fascinating story you have awaiting you, one that spans all time until the last red rays of a dying sun shine down on a bleak and used-up landscape, a story that will linger in your imagination for a long time.

Is it to be this way? you will ask. This is a vision of a future, but is it to be *the* future? We live in a pivotal century which may well decide what will happen to our children's children for a hundred generations. So, reader, the decision may well be up to you.

—Donald A. Wollheim

The Time Machine

H. G. WELLS

.....



AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 22

An Airmont Classic
specially selected for the Airmont Library
from the immortal literature of the world

THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION

©, Copyright, 1964, by
Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHAPTER ONE

THE Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses. Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it:) and his fecundity.

‘You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.’

‘Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to begin upon?’ said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

‘I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness *nil*, has no real

existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions.'

'That is all right,' said the Psychologist.

'Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence.'

'There I object,' said Filby. 'Of course a solid body may exist. All real things——'

'So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an *instantaneous* cube exist?'

'Don't follow you,' said Filby.

'Can a cube that does not last for any time at all, have a real existence?'

Filby became pensive. 'Clearly,' the Time Traveller proceeded, 'any real body must have extension in *four* directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and—Duration. But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter, because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives.'

'That,' said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp; 'that . . . very clear indeed.'

'Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked,' continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. 'Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not

know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. *There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it.* But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?’

‘I have not,’ said the Provincial Mayor.

‘It is simply this. That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions, which one may call Length, Breadth, and Thickness, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. But some philosophical people have been asking why *three* dimensions particularly—why not another direction at right angles to the other three?—and have even tried to construct a Four-Dimension geometry. Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month or so ago. You know how on a flat surface, which has only two dimensions, we can represent a figure of a three-dimensional solid, and similarly they think that by models of three dimensions they could represent one of four—if they could master the perspective of the thing. See?’

‘I think so,’ murmured the Provincial Mayor; and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic words. ‘Yes, I think I see it now,’ he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

‘Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old,

another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing.

'Scientific people,' proceeded the Time Traveller, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, 'know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognized? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time-Dimension.'

'But,' said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, 'if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?'

The Time Traveller smiled. 'Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.'

'Not exactly,' said the Medical Man. 'There are balloons.'

'But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jump-

ing and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.'

'Still they could move a little up and down,' said the Medical Man.

'Easier, far easier down than up.'

'And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment.'

'My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present movement. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave. Just as we should travel *down* if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth's surface.'

'But the great difficulty is this,' interrupted the Psychologist. 'You *can* move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time.'

'That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?'

'Oh, *this*,' began Filby, 'is all——'

'Why not?' said the Time Traveller.

'It's against reason,' said Filby.

'What reason?' said the Time Traveller.

'You can show black is white by argument,' said Filby, 'but you will never convince me.'

'Possibly not,' said the Time Traveller. 'But now you begin to see the object of my investigations into the geometry of Four Dimensions. Long ago I had a vague inkling of a machine——'

'To travel through Time!' exclaimed the Very Young Man.

'That shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines.'

Filby contented himself with laughter.

'But I have experimental verification,' said the Time Traveller.

'It would be remarkably convenient for the historian,' the Psychologist suggested. 'One might travel back and verify the accepted account of the Battle of Hastings, for instance!'

'Don't you think you would attract attention?' said the Medical Man. 'Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms.'

'One might get one's Greek from the very lips of Homer and Plato,' the Very Young Man thought.

'In which case they would certainly plough you for the Little-go. The German scholars have improved Greek so much.'

'Then there is the future,' said the Very Young Man. 'Just think! One might invest all one's money, leave it to accumulate at interest, and hurry on ahead!'

'To discover a society,' said I, 'erected on a strictly communistic basis.'

'Of all the wild extravagant theories!' began the Psychologist.

'Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until——'

'Experimental verification!' cried I. 'You are going to verify *that*?'

'The experiment!' cried Filby, who was getting brain-weary.

'Let's see your experiment anyhow,' said the Psychologist, 'though it's all humbug, you know.'

The Time Traveller smiled round at us. Then, still smiling faintly, and with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, he walked slowly out of the room, and we heard his slippers shuffling down the long passage to his laboratory.

The Psychologist looked at us. 'I wonder what he's got?'

'Some sleight-of-hand trick or other,' said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjurer he had seen at Burslem; but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance. And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing. He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearthrug.

On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down. The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low arm-chair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fire-place. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions.

The Time Traveller looked at us, and then at the mechanism. 'Well?' said the Psychologist.

'This little affair,' said the Time Traveller, resting his elbows upon the table and pressing his hands together above the apparatus, 'is only a model. It is my plan for a machine to travel through time. You will notice that it looks singularly askew, and that there is an odd twinkling appearance about this bar, as though it was in some way unreal.' He pointed to the part with his finger. 'Also, here is one little white lever, and here is another.'

The Medical Man got up out of his chair and peered into the thing. 'It's beautifully made,' he said.

'It took two years to make,' retorted the Time Traveller. Then, when we had all imitated the action